16
The Participation Forum[*]

February 15, 1996

Topic: Field-Washington Teamwork
in Planning and Reporting Results

In the 16th Participation Forum a panel of USAID/ Washington personnel discussed how the core values empowerment and participation are faring as the Agency embarks on its first "R4" season. Panelists and participants voiced serious criticisms but also shared ideas for ways to do a better job of working as a team. Discussion centered on several questions: How can USAID/Washington break the habit of being judgmental instead of empowering? What are the criteria for determining how and when USAID/Washington should be directive to the field? How can Washington learn to speak with one voice?

How we work together, Washington and the field, and the topic of "participation" are linked. Our ability to maintain effective, consistent, honorable partnerships with people in the host country depends on how well our internal processes work. When people who are on the front lines must often reverse themselves or do not know whether they can speak for the Agency, those collaborative relationships with host-country people become extremely difficult. Members of the panel were Terry Brown, DAA for Asia and the Near East (ANE); Elizabeth Warfield, formerly of the Guatemalan mission and now in ANE; Jon Breslar of the Africa Bureau; Joyce Holfeld, of the Population, Health and Nutrition Center of the Global Bureau; Nils Daulaire, DAA, Bureau for Policy and Program Coordination; and Michelle Adams-Matson, also of ANE.

A brief summary of this Forum, drafted at the Administrator's request, was sent as an executive message to all staff in March 1996.—Diane La Voy, Senior Policy Advisor for Participatory Development

The Temptation to Invent New Review Systems

Terry Brown

Two questions concerning field-Washington teamwork interest me. First, as we in USAID/Washington let go of the old lines of control of review, authority, intrusion with our missions, can we possibly resist the temptationto create new ones? Second, can we, as both responsible and responsive partners with our missions, speak with one voice to those missions?

Letting Go

Under reengineering, the formal relationship between Washington and the field is relatively simple and focused. The relationship starts with the joint development of a country strategy, which specifies all the resources that USAID is providing that country. That strategy document is reviewed and accepted by both the field and all Washington bureaus and offices with an interest in that country. Once accepted, this document sets the framework for an annual "R4" document: Reporting on Results and Requesting Resources. It also indicates any changes in the strategic-objective framework or indicators.

The R4 document may be thought of as a contract with the mission and the basis upon which the mission proceeds with its implementation of its strategy for the next fiscal year. There are no PIDs (Project Implementation Design), no Project Papers, no new activity descriptions, no individual or ad hoc delegations of authority, no semi-annual project reviews. In other words, the system has been simplified and streamlined.

Two Stories

I have two stories to tell about how this is working in practice. Last year we reviewed the strategy and R4 of one of our missions, found it acceptable and reasonable, and let the mission develop a new seven-year program. In doing so, the mission followed a very intensive participatory outreach process and developed a request for competitive grants (RFA). Some virtual team members in Washington who were involved felt uncomfortable about parts of the RFA and brought it to the attention of the ANE Bureau. No regional bureau member was on the virtual team for this particular activity.   In looking at the RFA—which is not normally a Washington review document—the bureau concluded that the mission appeared to be varying significantly from the approved strategy and R4 documents in that the RFA, which laid out the implementing grants for the next seven years, did not even include the strategic-objective framework. After some back-and-forth, we stopped the RFA from going onto the street and worked with the mission on defining and incorporating the S.O. framework. Eventually, after the snow and the furlough, the RFA was released.

The second story involves a mission's congressional presentation. Again, this is not normally a review-and-approval document. However, the way it was presented, it was not conveying the program in a way in which we felt comfortable for the Hill.

Several days ago I called the mission director and asked for a modification of the CP. If we presented it as the mission drafted it, it would inevitably raise questions on the Hill because this country's CP is one of the few that anyone on the Hill reads or cares about. Not only was there insufficient results information, but also the framework deviated from last year's CP.

Are these stories examples of USAID/Washington creating new levers and points of review that are ad hoc and seemingly disjointed from the new system? Or are we concerned legitimately about responsiveness to Congress, budgetary issues, earmarks—the things Washington deals with that affect mission programs? Can we carry out our responsibilities without creating intrusive systems that ultimately retract the delegation of authority and disempower missions?

Teamwork and Empowerment

Elizabeth Warfield

Reengineering is not an end in itself; it's a means to an end. As members of the USAID team we are all trying to achieve dramaticimprovements in development results for our customers. Core values in this process are teamwork and empowerment.

Barriers to Teamwork

What really struck me coming back to Washington from Guatemala was the need to really break down the barriers that sometimes exist among bureaus, between Washington and the field, and within missions. There is frequently a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities—more within the Washington context—and redundancies among the different parts of the organization. This leads to a degree of tension. In the spirit of reengineering and streamlining our processes, we in Washington have to look at breaking down barriers across the organization. It is important to remember that we're not dealing with a *mission* strategy, we're dealing with a *country* strategy, which involves people both in the mission and in USAID/Washington.

The concept of joint planning and joint programming might need a little further definition. Joint planning and programming rely on the concept of "virtual" team members from Washington. It's not clear who is a virtual team member or what the responsibility of a virtual team member is. It could be a technical relationship, or it may be perceived as a judgmental relationship.

Avoiding Micromanagement

In ANE we carried out a customer survey and got informal feedback on how the action planor R4 strategy process worked last year. One of the main feedbacks was that USAID/ Washington does not speak with one voice. It's very difficult for missions to reconcile all the different opinions that come from Washington. There was also strong feedback about the lack of timeliness of response.

In Guatemala, when we looked at the delegation of authority in empowering mission staff, clearances which at one point had taken two to three months were reduced to two to three weeks, sometimes even to two to three days. These reductions in clearance time can be very important if you're trying to get a contract or a grant through the system to have an impact on your development partners and your customers.

In ANE we are going around to all the offices and bureaus in Washington to clarify what our roles and responsibilities are in this R4 process. We are trying to determine what questions we can ask and questions we should not ask the missions so that we avoid micromanagement. We are asking office representatives to be empowered to speak for their offices when they come to R4 meetings, so that when it comes time to clear the R4 cable, it takes two weeks and not two months to get out a feedback cable.

Setting Parameters

Jon Breslar

I think a bit of the organizational culture in the Africa Bureau was that we didn't involve people from M, PPC, BHR, or the Global Bureau before a strategy was written. We expected that when the strategy came in, we'd duke it out. Now we are trying to do things differently. We are trying to set parameters early on in the strategic planning process and arrive at a common understanding early on in the process among all of us in USAID/ Washington. At the same time we also want to get a view from the field as to where they see themselves going. In melding these two perceptions we can actually come up with something in the name of good guidance early on in strategic planning.

To make a long story short, we've done this five times: with Namibia, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, and Somalia. It's a little too soon to say how it has worked.

We found out that in the case of Ghana, and probably Namibia, when we have good development partners, a good development context, and a program that is fairly well established, things go pretty well. We can establish parameters pretty well, and there's a lot of consensus at the beginning.

In Kenya, which comes up for review in another month or so, the process was much more contentious. People were almost at bipolar opposites in talking about Kenya. The main question was what to do when the development situation is good and the results are positive, but where the political and human rights context is dicey. We found early on that having a dialogue among ourselves and with the field for parameter-setting has been useful even if we have not arrived at a consensus. It lets us see where we disagree early on in the process, and it lets us send out some kind of guidance to the missions that helps them know what will or may not be accepted even before they start.

Joint Programming in the True Sense

Joyce Holfeld

In the PHN Center (Population, Health and Nutrition) we really want to work on the one-voice approach to programming and working together toward shared objectives. A couple of case examples show how our attempts are working. We are trying to develop relationships with the various bureaus so that we do have one voice.

Each bureau, each mission, each program brings a different perspective in the programming process. The PHN Center may have a technical view, PPC has the policy view; the regional bureau has the regional strategic view, and the mission has perspective on whether a strategy will work in the country and whether it's appropriate for the country.

In the PHN Center, we are developing programming team interfaces. To make programming joint in the true sense, we formed joint programming teams that include members from the mission, from the REDSOs,from the regional bureaus, from the Center, and in some cases, from PPC. Our liaison person is usually the head of the PHN strategic-objective team. In many cases we also have a host-country reference group made up of ministry of health personnel or customers.

For example, in Morocco last year, at the strategic plan time, we discussed phasing out our sector by the year 1995. We formed a team—mission, bureau, and global—to address the phase-out problem, and came up with a strategy that everybody agrees with. It will be presented and reviewed in the R4 forum and hopefully we can move toward implementation.

In this case there was no second-guessing. All sides have had a chance to articulate any problems they see. There won't be any surprises. I think we will be able to implement this strategy in a timely and efficient manner, and we're all in agreement on the road we're taking.

The Dynamics and Dilemmas of the Field-Washington Relationship

Nils Daulaire

No field is less amenable to standardization and central control than development. Considering the difference in what matters and what works from one country to another and the extraordinary cultural and economic variability in the places that this agency works, it's difficult to conceive of a single centralized approach that will be effective. That's a dilemma that we face on a daily basis in dealing with policy issues here at USAID.

View from the Field

All through the 1980s, I was working in Nepal as a child-survival advisor. At that time, USAID's definition of child survival was oral rehydration therapy for diarrheal disease and immunization—period, end of discussion. Early on in my stay in Nepal, it was quite evident that there were other factors that ought to be part of that equation. The major killer of children in Nepal was pneumonia, a disease that was nowhere on the twin-engine horizon. For years while I was in Nepal, we tried to get USAID/Washington approval to work broadly in the issue of childhood pneumonia but ran against tremendous resistance. We did continue to work in the area, but quietly and without making a big fuss with Washington, because they would have shut us down.

In the late 1980s, I was part of a team designing a new child-survival project in Papua New Guinea. I knew that Papua New Guinea had probably the highest rates of childhood pneumonia of any place in the world and thought it would be a fascinating place to do some design work. I was taken aback when, at the end of a discussion with the USAID/ Washington person, I was told, "And this will be a great opportunity for you to learn more about our most recent thinking about child survival." To me it was classic. Here was somebody from Washington trying to regulate a situation that should have been driven by the realities of the field. As it turned out, we worked very nicely together. The project that wound up being designed in Papua New Guinea included childhood pneumonia as well as the twin engines. And in late 1991 or early 1992, USAID/Washington itself accepted that the largest killer of children in the world probably should be part of our strategy for child survival.

Dilemmas

In the area of population and health, where I have focused, there are four strategic objectives: reducing unintended pregnancies,reducing child deaths, reducing maternal deaths, and reducing the transmission of HIV-AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. These are certainly not the entire spectrum of health needs around the world, but they are, based on a vision of how we can best accomplish a coherent goal with very limited resources.

When we start talking about approaches, we start having trouble. The more closely we try to limit and define what approaches we should take, the more we revert to the situation I faced in Nepal 10 years ago. If our approach to reducing child deaths is only oral rehydration therapy and immunization, what do we do about something which is the biggest killer of children? My view is that USAID/ Washington should focus on the strategic objectives and leave maximum flexibility to the field in terms of developing, testing, and applying the approaches.

But the final dilemma is that in Washington, we are not free agents. We have friends about three miles to our north who are very interested in what we do. This year's legislation contains a Child Survival and Diseases Fund. Earlier this week I was up on the Hill to discuss with congressional staff the activities to be authorized by this fund. Congress wants every activity described in advance to make sure that we do not define everything as child survival and diseases.

Similarly, USAID faces restrictions in the area of population. We can only argue up to a certain point with powerful forces on the Hill about what it is we mean in population or family planning, and after that, it will be counter-productive. People in the field need to understand that we work under those restrictions.

Reengineering's Triple Challenge

Michelle Adams-Matson

USAID's core values have been around for quite some time, and they do affect our effectiveness and efficiency as an agency. Participation, customer focus, and teamwork are not just nice concepts to promote. Ultimately we promote them because are trying to concentrate on achieving results. What we do needs to be placed in that context. In looking at some of the dilemmas between the field and Washington discussed here today, often it is difficult to define what falls into the category of clearly wrong, versus experimentation, versus a valid difference of opinion. Such situations highlight the fact that missions in USAID/Washington need to work together to build mutual trust as a team rather than as adversaries.

The Spirit of Reengineering
The first of the three challenges that are key in moving forward with reengineering is that staff have to understand the broader principles behind reengineering. Many have interpreted reengineering to mean new terminology, training, computer systems, and that kind of thing, and we have seen some fatigue out there in that regard.

But reengineering is much broader than new computers. It provides individuals with the opportunity to reexamine processes and procedures and to identify where greater efficiencies can be obtained. For example, one of the geographic offices in ANE submitted a set of suggestions to senior management on how to save operating funds. That is as much a part of reengineering as the new directives.

Checks and Balances
The second challenge is to understand the reengineered system as a whole system with checks and balances. For example, the value of empowerment is obviously mirrored by accountability. But empowerment is also mirrored by teamwork. The idea behind the strategic planning directives was that once agreement on the strategic objectives was achieved, Washington could delegate to the field the responsibility for implementation.

But the other fundamental premise of the system is joint planning. There should be collaboration between Washington and the field as the strategic planning process goes forward so that Washington understands the mission program and so that, when the mission comes in with the R4, the technical folks back here understand the progress the mission is making toward its objectives and can makereasonable budget decisions. Obviously, the idea behind teamwork is that you pull together expertise early in the process of planning for greater efficiency. We're trying to change the nature of our work processes and to move away from a sequential process where individuals pass a piece of work from one person to the next until one person in the chain raises a major issue and then we start at zero again.

The Need for Management Training
The third challenge is that managers have to understand, support, and implement new management principles at all levels. Some operating units have attempted to manage by consensus. Others have created teams but have not truly empowered those teams. When should managers step in to make decisions or resolve conflict, or when should they step back and allow a team to function as a team?

We need to establish a common base of understanding of what our management principles are and how we use them from a practical standpoint. We all understand that teamwork is one of our values. But teamwork is also not equal to holding a meeting. It requires greater discipline: defining the team's common objective and individual roles, responsibilities, and contributions. In one case the ANE Bureau tried to get virtual team members to participate in a mission strategic planning process. People wanted to be virtual team members, but sometimes they didn't fully understand that being a virtual team member required a commitment of time and resources.

Joint planning and being a virtual team member may not be the same thing. Joint planning is the idea of Washington speaking with one voice, bringing people from policy and technical people around

the table and coming to consensus about the message that should be sent to the field. Virtual team membership means that an individual in Washington is providing individual expertise to a team in the field. It is critical to get clear definitions of these concepts.

Discussion Session

USAID's Ability to Control Its Environment

Harriet Dessler: We need to be honest about our ability to control our environment. We're going through a process of change, and despite the Africa Bureau's valiant effort to set parameters, when a mission sends in its R4, the parameters may have changed. (You followed our guidance, you gave us three funding scenarios, and now we've decided we don't love you anymore.) We need to have a helpful process for deciding what to do then. How do we apply our values of decency and helpfulness in resolving situations that we don't have control over?

We should also explore other basic things that we can do to be helpful. For example, on a limited scale there are opportunities for cross-bureau working groups to identify and resolve issues.

Marcy Bernbaum: There are always situations outside of our control: the beautiful strategy comes up and suddenly somebody from the Hill or from another agency or somebody who hasn't been in the process here jumps in who has more clout. I would be interested in getting your reactions as to how these sorts of situations can be anticipated.

Nils Daulaire: Being able to anticipate the unforeseen is one of the strengths of a team. If the team is reasonably constituted, then it will consist of people who know the country situa-tion well enough to know that the ambassador is likely to jump in, to take an example. It includes people who are dealing with the poli-tical process well enough to know that direct congressional input may be expected and people from USAID/Washington who are more familiar with the dynamics of decision-making than the people who are on the front lines doing the design. When teams are put together, we have to include people who know what the outside influences might be. We can't anticipate everything, but we can anticipate a lot.

Checks and Balances

Sarah Wines: What positive aspects of the check-and-balance system that we've had for years are being incorporated within this current scenario of reengineering?

Terry Brown: The check-and-balance question has always been a difficult one because we aren't dealing with a bottom-up planning system, really. We're dealing with a bottom-up and a top-down system. Missions don't have a blank page on which to develop their strategies and deal with resource allocation. We are trying to find the middle ground where missions are informed of the resource and directive environment in which they must operate, but are free tactically to decide, if they are going to get X amount of money for biodiversity, how that can best be used in a country context.

However, there is an expectation that we really do have a bottom-up system. And if you don't understand the complexity of this two-dimensional process, then it looks more like oversight and control.

Evaluation

Sarah Wines: How does the evaluation system play in reengineering? Does our evaluation system provide an incentive or a disincentive to behave one way or another?

Terry Brown: The new evaluation system works if the people who are using it apply it, but if they deal with it as a mere form, then it's about as bad as the old system. The evaluation structure is open to looking at performance in results terms and in team-performance terms if the person is operating in an environment in which that is possible.

Timeliness

Joyce Holfeld: Timeliness is a key issue. If people know what the parameters are up front,they can deal with them. But feedback is harder to deal with at the end of the planning process. We seem to be so busy here in Washington that sometimes we don't focus on an issue until it is too late.

Pirie Gall: I know from my own experience in my last overseas post that bringing folks in from Washington early on in a strategy exercise made the process go smooth as silk. Half the review group was involved in writing the strategy. Parameter-setting clears out the underbrush and says, "Okay, here's the range of things we have to talk about." Then we can argue within that about how fast and how far and how much.

Lack of Clarity about Procedures/Management Structures

Harriet Dessler: We in Washington need to have a little humility right now. We are asking missions and operating units to implement procedures that we are inventing or to follow guidance that we are still clearing and haven't even sent out.

Pirie Gall: We may be beating ourselves up a little bit for not being perfect in the first year of reengineering, when we are still writing the book. No wonder that we aren't all following the scripture. For example, suppose you are trying to work with a colleague on a CP for two years out, and your strategy review isn't for three months. So what do you do? You have to write something in the CP that sounds like the strategy that hasn't been approved yet. Those are the disconnects that are happening with us right now.

Elizabeth Warfield: On the question of being judgmental, what we're dealing with now is ambiguity because all the rules haven't been written. We need clarity in the management contract on where Washington has a say and where we can only suggest.

Teamwork Issues

Charles Stevenson: I heard one person say that a drawback to teams is that it takes an awful lot of time to get everybody together and interact.

Cate Johnson: Concerning teamwork and other managerial devices, the latest scientific research shows that teamwork does take more time, but the end result is more effective and efficient in the long run.

Harriet Dessler: We have to be selective in what we ask teams to do. The team concept implies a shared commitment and a shared involvement and a result. However, there are some things that we don't need a team to do. We need to be clear about when we need a team, when we need a committee, and when we need a worker bee left alone to do some work.

Diane La Voy: One of the things that stands out in my appreciation of teamwork is the importance of an up-front investment, particularly in working out people's different roles. Sometimes a team may start off by assuming that they are all in it together and all equal in the sight of God. A better model is a medical team, where each member—the anesthesiologist, the surgeon and the nurse—each has a differentiated role.

Elizabeth Warfield: In Guatemala, our lesson learned from about five years of teamwork experience was that teams be limited in size to five to eight people and be product- or task-oriented. Both temporary and more permanent teams had a role.

Peggy Schultz: On the concern that was raised before that teams take more time, I think one thing groups that are becoming teams should understand is that there are predictable stages of development for a group. The first couple of stages are pretty messy, but you have to work through them.

A group of people without a clear purpose on what they're trying to accomplish is not really a team. It takes time for a group of people to arrive at a common understanding and a shared vision of what they're trying to achieve.

There are proven tools and techniques that groups can use to guide the time that they spend in meetings, which is what teams do a lot, so that they use the time productively, whether it's to generate ideas, whether it's to reach conclusions, whether it's to analyze something.

Susan Walls: The Management Planning Office is just finishing up the technical review panels on five new IQCs that will provide help in team building and other management functions.

Barriers to Collaboration

Harriet Dessler: Maybe we ought to talk about what some of the barriers are to effective collaboration. One of them is the ability for us to move between the field and Washington. Are we putting our travel money where we need it, when we need it, to intervene in a helpful fashion?

Another is barriers which we ourselves create. The way we handle drafts and tentative presentations often makes missions hesitant to share their stuff up front.

The Effects of Budgetary Cutbacks

Larry Cooley: The context of reengineering is dramatically altered by budgetary cutbacks. Particularly in the field, where people are very committed to the programs they're trying to implement, it is difficult, no matter how devoted you are to the precepts of reengineering, not to fight for your own survival when you see the prospect of a major cut or a major diminution of whole strategic objectives or parts of strategic objectives. It's unrealistic to expect that during a period of high uncertainty, there's not going to be a certain amount of effort on the part of missions to defend programs, even if that means trying to find ways to use the system to advantage.

Effective Dialogue

Pirie Gall: We would do well to follow the motto "trust but verify." If a management contract is fraying around the edges between Washington and the field, much depends on how we approach the issue with the field. There are a lot of ways to ask the question, "What the hell are you doing out there?" One is, "Could you fill me in a little bit on...?" Washington has been in the habit for a long time of saying, "What the hell are you doing out there?" "Could you fill me in a little bit on such-and-such?" says "I trust you, but I'm verifying something here. Can you help me out?" rather than, "I really don't trust you. I'm sure you're trying to get away with something, and I think I caught you in the act. Ha!"

Elizabeth Warfield: Washington can suggest and then it's up to the mission. Mission personnel should be confident enough in their work and capabilities to receive suggestions for improvement without flipping immediately into a defensive posture. This is always a challenge at the personal as well as the organizational level.

Jon Breslar: Right now some folks in USAID/Washington are almost apologetic if they have to bring up an issue or be a bit contentious in a review. In a couple of the reviews we have had, S.O. teams have worked with host-country counterparts, NGOs, the donor community—everyone who's in the sphere of influence in a strategy. Then they come to Washington with ownership of the exercise. In our Mali review, for example, mission folks said, in effect, "We talked to three million Malians. How can you send us back empty-handed or how can you make great changes?" But we are also part of the process back here in Washington. We want to be decent and to respect what the field is doing. But by the same token, we have to come to some kind of joint agreement recognizing all the involvement and all the ownership that mission teams have in what they are doing.

Cooley: In reengineering there seems to be an inverse relationship between the extent to which missions pursue active participation on the host-country side and the awkwardness of the relationship with Washington, because it's hard to build relationships in both directions at the same time. Jon's

notion about parameters as being the most intelligent way to address that problem is exactly right. Mission teams will need to be as clear as possible about where the boundaries are, when they begin the internal-to-the-country consultation, and confident that, at least within limits, the discussion thereafter with Washington will be a professional dialogue and not a direct oversight relationship. It's extremely awkward for the missions to take the participation dictum seriously, to go through a consultative process, sometimes up to the point that it's almost a ratification of a strategy, and then to have to go back to host country partners and beg offand say, "Well, we're sorry, but certain things have changed in our external environment." People are realistic enough, I've found, in the host-country side not to hold that against the mission, but it's embarrassing for the mission to be in that position.

Communications from the E-mail Bag

Pre- and Post-Forum Comments

The Need for Creating *Common* Understandings

John Grayzel: "USAID culture rewards being judgmental over being participatory. How can that be changed, and how can USAID/W become a learning rather than an enjoining culture?

"We recently experienced this challenge in working on the indicators for our democracy program. Taking seriously USAID/W call for Global and missions to work together we used the $75,000 provided us by Global to jointly develop a Scope of Work, and to have Global send over two outstanding specialists in their fields to help us work jointly on our indicators. What we found, not surprisingly, was that working together with people in Global created a common understanding between us and working with the specialists provided by Global resulted in a refined common understanding between us and the specialists, and that we and the TDY team, working together with our partners, created common understandings among us all. The lesson was obvious: you get common understanding by working directly on problem solving.

"BUT!!!! when that common understanding was presented in Washington we heard back from various channels—including visiting partner representatives in Washington—that the audience reaction seemed to be one not of a group ready to learn but a jury ready to condemn. The participation of USAID/W seemed not to have helped communication; the feedback we got indicated that the basic judgmental behavior of USAID was expanded to include the Global specialists who assisted us—under an unconscious presumption of guilty by association.

"In reflecting upon this I at least have extracted the following tentative conclusions as to major constraints in USAID/W participating with missions:

- "First: there is not a general established atmosphere in USAID/W of learning from missions but rather one of judging missions.
- "Second: USAID/W has not specified who is or is not a member of the mission assist team. Individuals not directly involved repeatedly pop up and exert the putative authority by challenging rather than contributing. Those who have worked closely with the missions, rather than being respected as representatives to convey understanding, sometimes actually become surrogates to be flogged in the absence of the mission. To us they are heros but to some of their Washington colleagues they seem to be traitors.
- "Third: A major factor behind USAID/W judgmental attitudes is lack of acquaintance with field realities. In particular, lack of travel means few USAID/W personnel really get to see the field anymore and seeing is still believing.

- "Fourth: Many USAID/W personnel, particularly critical contract personnel, do not know who we are. USAID seems to rely more and more on contracted expertise that presumes that USAID and missions lack expertise (when in reality it is more that we lack time). As a result, many of the responses that come from Washington appear almost patronizing and unaware that our missions are staffed not only by highly experienced personnel but also by personnel whose qualifications and achievements are often superior to contracted specialists.

"The solution to these problems involves both USAID/W and the missions. Missions must learn better how to communicate and teach; but USAID/W has to learn better how to listen and learn. One key is working together, for the obvious solutions are part of the process of real participation. But since everyone cannot participate in everything, the question remains: How can USAID construct a culture that respects the learning of those who have participated and learn from them?"

True Empowerment

Barry Burnett: "The Agency must do better at developing strategic objective teams and subsidiary teams involving representatives based in both the field and Washington. The "virtual" team member concept must be implemented, particularly as we face reduced travel budgets. For example, if mission x is planning an intervention which will be supported, in part, with food aid, appropriate BHR staff should be asked to join the team. On the other hand, if OFDA is gearing up to address a disaster in country y, they should organize a disaster assistance team which includes appropriate reps. from that country, including USAID, Embassy, Host Government, and possibly NGOs, the UN, etc. This is also important if we are to truly implement the "empowerment" core value. I fear that USAID/W-based bureaus and offices are trying to maintain excessive controls and, in the process, thwarting empowerment to operating units closest to the development or humanitarian problem. We can and must do better if reengineering is to be more than a paper exercise."

Anonymous: "Empowerment is the biggest issue. The field is full of directors who are used to fairly authoritarian styles of management and decision making. Some missions have spent a lot of time on reengineering. There is not much to show for the investment in time. What I fear is that we will have is two parallel systems, the old and the new."

Open Questions and Hot Topics

John Jessup: "How do you balance the ADS chapters and mandatory directives to the field against the value of empowerment? What are the criteria for determining how and when USAID/W must be directive to the field?"

Frank Pavich: "The question on the minds of the reengineers in Cairo is: Why can't management stop everything and delegate authority to SO and RP teams to meet the demands of their responsibilities? We have been stuck between the new and old systems far too long, every one waiting for the other to give the command. The runners are ready, where is the starting gun?"

Tony Pryor: "A big issue for me is the tendency in our missions to get so tied up with the USAID teamwork issues that we forget to work on links to our external partners."

Views from the Lusaka Mission

Craig Noren: "Following are the ideas of various mission staff on USAID/W-Field teamwork.

- "Teamwork works best when the players in Washington and in the field are personally known to each other from previous working relationships. For example, my working relationships with AFR/SA, AFR/CP, and to a lesser extent LPA are easier because I worked previously on the South Africa desk in Washington. Without the personal touch, teamwork becomes a lot more difficult.
- "We do, from time-to-time, get offers out of the blue of help on key themes/issues. This is helpful because it is clear the person offering the help is willing to take the extra steps which are almost always necessary to get a useful product out to us.
- "I am concerned that Agency official 'Networks' and 'Hotlines' appear to be much less effective than was obviously intended. From recent experience, one key network appears to be manned in USAID/W by only one knowledgeable person. The information is unavailable when that source goes on TDY. Responses from the field in answer to network questions are very sparse!! Clearly, this needs looking into. Perhaps we need a biweekly 'All-Hands Network Report' to tell field people what issues have been sent in and responses to them."

Team-based R4 Review

Karl Schwartz: "A team works best when its members share trust and confidence in each other. The issue is not whether missions have a "blank slate," but whether USAID/W has the confidence to trust missions to pursue their agreed mandate to separate policy and regulations from practice. USAID/W management units need to develop operating procedures based on their increased confidence in missions rather than the assumption that they need to be controlled.

"One way this can be encouraged is to experiment with a team-based R4 review process in which an empowered, multifunctional team of not to exceed ten USAID/W officers would approve a mission's R4 submission. The functions included on the team would be technical, financial, and contractual, with policy included in technical. The balance of functions and size of the team would depend on the nature of its partner mission. A fully delegated and staffed mission would require a smaller USAID/W team than a smaller one with more limited authority. A fully staffed mission has individuals with the same functional skills as USAID/W staff who would be prospective members of the USAID/W team. These individuals are equally aware of and committed to the agency's policies and strategies. It would be up to USAID/W R4 team to determine how it would achieve its task of approving the mission's R4 most efficiently, a process sure to identify existing review practices with little or no added value.

"Take this as a pepsi challenge. My bet is, the aftertaste of a team-based R4 review will be much more pleasant."